

Connecticut State Board of Education
Hartford

Position Statement on Educational Leadership: A Collaborative Effort to Improve Student Achievement

Adopted December 4, 2002

The Connecticut State Board of Education believes that 21st century schools require a type of leadership that can promote the changes required to adequately prepare students for the world today and in the future. The foundation for high academic achievement and more productive schools and students is strong collaborative leadership among the school district team: the local board, the superintendent, principals, teachers, students, parents and community-based partners.

Effective leadership is grounded in the belief that people in all positions with different responsibilities have a necessary and legitimate role to play in developing a common vision for their schools and working together to guide the school enterprise toward that vision. The traditional administrative leader, the superintendent at the district level and the principal at the school level, has authority and power inherent in the scope of responsibility of the position. **Effective leaders invest this authority and power in others to accomplish a common goal.** By sharing authority, effective school leaders empower, inspire and motivate others to work as a unified team toward a shared purpose—student achievement. Thus, the skills and talents of the staff and other educational stakeholders are applied toward a common end—student learning. This can best be accomplished in an environment of open communication, shared responsibilities, accountability and trust.

The world has changed dramatically since the original blueprint for American schools was developed nearly three centuries ago. The skills and competencies required of an educated citizenry, now and in the future, are very different from those of the colonial, agricultural and industrial eras. Students must be prepared to effectively use technology, interact in a diverse world with a global economy, make informed, ethical decisions based on a rapidly expanding knowledge base, and engage in lifelong learning.

School districts must establish and support effective leadership structures that include all members of the school district team. The new leadership paradigm must move districts and schools toward becoming a collaborative learning community, focused on student learning.

- Effective educational leaders raise expectations for students, staff members and the entire school system and implement actions based on high expectations.
- Effective educational leaders build a shared vision and inspire and motivate others in pursuit of that vision.
- Effective educational leaders build a collaborative community and use open, continuous communication to inform, inspire and seek input toward the common goal, student learning.

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- Effective educational leaders create and support a professional climate that ensures continuing professional growth for all members of the educational community.
- Effective educational leaders delegate authority and responsibility appropriately while maintaining accountability.
- Effective educational leaders take risks and tolerate risk taking by others in support of research-based, effective redesign and change.
- Effective educational leaders support new, proven initiatives and develop and manage necessary resources to support and maintain such initiatives.
- Effective educational leaders engage in shared decision making and create opportunities for sharing knowledge and data about critical issues.
- Effective educational leaders are knowledgeable and have strong communication skills. They effectively apply their knowledge and skills to build support for the school system and diffuse negative pressures.
- Effective educational leaders work collaboratively to identify future district, school and student needs and plan appropriately to meet those needs.

Opportunities for leadership exist throughout the learning community. For example, **students** must be involved in taking responsibility for their own learning and setting personal goals. Students should have opportunities to share ideas with policymakers and provide input into curriculum initiatives and school activities. **Teachers** should have opportunities to lead instructional improvement initiatives and be instrumental in setting the instructional and professional development agendas. **Paraprofessionals** should have opportunities to identify and participate in professional development programs. The **school board, superintendent** and **school principals** should understand and respect their roles and work cooperatively to establish and implement the district's educational agenda. By empowering members of the school district community to participate as team members, the district and its schools can create a culture that promotes student achievement. Teachers, students, **parents** and other school district stakeholders all can be active in problem solving, decision making, resource building and curriculum and instructional design. Then, boards, superintendents and school principals can redefine a broad range and balance of responsibilities in support of the learning environment.

School district leaders hold an increasingly difficult and challenging job with many new demands, including accountability for the success of each child. The State Board of Education, the local board and other school leaders must think differently about the type of leadership needed to ensure that all children have access to quality education and to individual success. Strong, effective leadership that taps the skills and resources of the entire educational community can release organization potential, make decisions and actions count, and increase the sense that individuals, working together, can make a difference.

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